

LETTERS

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



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Scott joint-use airport doesn't present rosy picture

To the editor:

All is not so rosy as you make it appear in your recent news articles concerning the joint-use of Scott. You are right about one thing—many questions about the issue are still unanswered.

Could it be that those who are pushing the project don't want those answers until "after the fact?" One could assume that from the one-sided approach most all the media sources are taking.

Let me enlighten you and your readers with a few verses from the "down-side" of this proposal. Progress and growth is one thing—the joint-use of Scott is the worst possible choice for the communities surrounding Scott.

We are the people most affected by this ill-conceived plan, yet we are being treated like non-voters by the "pushers" of economical growth for Southwestern Illinois.

It is obviously easy for an outsider to accentuate the positive and ignore the negative. They have little to lose—or do they? Let's examine some of those issues and questions that the outsiders choose not to talk about. Here are a few:

1. What is the real environmental impact we are facing with a commercial airport at Scott? Increased air traffic generates: more noise, more vehicular traffic, more air pollution, more crime, more aircraft accidents/incidents, more personal property taxes, lower residential values, and the list goes on and on.

2. What happens with the loss of prime farmland and wetlands? Nearly 4,000 acres will be taken from food production and endangered species. Food prices

will increase with decreased production. People will go hungry. Wetlands will be destroyed and can never be mitigated. Water run-off will cause downstream flooding, and the list goes on and on.

3. What about tax burdens on the local property owners? (This will also catch some of you "outsiders.") You can bet the tax bite will be tremendous by the current trend of political spending.

With the present state of the economy there are no firm guarantees that federal and state grants will be available when needed for this project—then where are we? Poor planning is no excuse to rip off the taxpayer, who is already overburdened. Let's face it, whatever the government wants to spend, you and I pay the bill, if we do nothing to stop it.

4. What about the stability of Scott in a joint-use configuration? Shaky at best would be my guess. With the loss of Rep. Mel Price to protect Scott, the political "apples" will begin to switch hands if politics hold true to form. Or maybe that is why the politicians want the commercial airport, just in case we lose Scott!

About half the population in the surrounding communities are made up of active or retired military families. What do you prefer, an established military base, or a commercial airport on paper? Think about the trade-off.

5. What about urbanization of the communities surrounding Scott? Obviously the "outsiders" and "planners" are ready to sacrifice us for their pipe dreams. All of the new and expensive beautiful homes being

built in these communities will become financial burdens when residential values decrease and taxes increase. Homes will be replaced with warehouses because of the close proximity to a commercial airport. Look at Bridgeton, MO. It is being overrun by the expansion of Lambert Field. Our homes are the largest investment most of us will ever make.

6. What about economic benefits? Grossly over-projected. There may eventually be some. Even the planners predict 10-15 years before the airport can be self-supporting. It would take even longer if federal or state grants collapse.

The governor is already yelling for a tax increase. All the other economic growth that may occur with the airport will occur without the airport. Jobs in the numbers projected are wishful thinking. Does anyone really believe the unemployment rate will go down? History will continue on course—most of the airport builders would come from out of state just as they have for the other large construction jobs at Scott. The few jobs which may be available for local residents will be the minimum wage-type jobs. Advantages to the local businesses are misleading. Ask yourselves, "How often do I stop downtown St. Louis whenever I fly out of Lambert?" Get the picture?

7. What about our children and their educational facilities? Airport planners and pushers don't talk about the added burden of sound-proofing schools, moving them out of the traffic patterns, and exposing them to all the unsafe conditions and interrupted learning situations. School

taxes are already out of control. How much can we afford?

Communities throughout the United States near large commercial airports are filing legal suits against the major cities for noise pollution in the schools. Must we go through that? If we can't afford to educate our future generation, then what good will airports be anyway?

8. What about the choice of Scott AFB to locate a commercial airport? It could be located a few miles to the south where farmland is not prime and in many cases not tilled, yet flat, not near any community, and (there's) good access to the St. Louis metropolitan area. Why go to all the expense of moving recently renovated government housing, moving schools, raising taxes unreasonably, and relocating businesses? I don't see the savings of joint-use!

The readers may be wondering at this point what makes the writer an authority on the subject. The writer is a concerned citizen with credentials as good as those of the planners, who has studied the problem almost daily for the past four years. And, he has done it in a way that is fair and objective so as to arrive at a logical conclusion.

The positives have been "overstated" and I think it's time to give more attention to the "down-side." I personally would like to see everyone interested in this project achieve their dreams—but let's be a little more fair about it.

Move the commercial airport on down the road—and full speed ahead!

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